

# Building Reconciliation at the U of S

College of Arts & Science/Department of Geography and Planning

## Spatial Production, Placemaking, and Indigenous Urbanism in Canada

Sarem Nejad (PhD Candidate), Ryan Walker (Faculty Supervisor)

### INTRODUCTION

Cities in Canada are situated in the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples. Existing approaches to engaging Indigenous communities in urbanism processes have not been influential in removing various forms of discrimination and marginalisation within urban areas. Indigenous communities have the capacity, knowledge, and ability to introduce new epistemologies and approaches to urban planning and design.

### OBJECTIVES

- This research examines the extent to which urban planning and design respond to the needs, aspirations, and claims of urban Indigenous communities.
- It explores the opportunities that Indigeneity brings to urbanism processes which benefit not only Indigenous citizens but all citizens.
- It searches for finding the ways that facilitate Indigenous participation in the production and programming of urban space and place.



Monument honouring missing and murdered Indigenous women, the Forks, Winnipeg

### MATERIALS & METHODS



Canadian Museum for Human Rights, Winnipeg

- Face-to-face open-ended interviews with 19 Indigenous citizens. Participants were asked about their urban experience, how they perceive urban space and place, how they think that their rights, needs, and aspirations are fulfilled.
- The second set of interviews with high-level Indigenous officials working at managerial positions in different Indigenous organisations on their participation in urban planning and programming in addition to the provision of civic services for Indigenous communities.
- A third set of interviews with municipal officials to elicit how they engage with the issue of reconciliation in regards of incorporating Indigeneity in their planning and programming efforts.

### RESULTS

Indigenous citizens perceive the spatial structure of the city as oppressive, discriminatory, and privileging in their everyday lives. Inclusion and engagement strategies are inconsistent with rights, needs, and aspiration of Indigenous peoples. Inclusion and engagement strategies are structured within existing planning and decision-making frameworks.

Collaborative planning strategies are inspired by contemporary politics of recognition under liberal democratic reconciliation politics. For interviewees, such strategies demonstrate a de-radicalised and de-politicised form of recognising Indigenous specific urban rights in Winnipeg. For urban Indigenous communities, recognition of Indigenous original occupancy and its consequent constitutional rights underpin any effort towards reconciliation and collaboration in policy making and planning in Canadian cities.



Circle of Life Thunderbird House, Winnipeg

### CONCLUSIONS

Urban Indigenous communities do not only expect to receive better social services, jobs, and other essential needs in cities. As *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study* (Enviroics, 2010) confirms, they are looking forward to playing a more significant role in shaping urban environments and influencing the social and cultural life of their cities. In other words, reclaiming urban spaces and places in settler cities is a quintessential aspect of constructive reconciliation with Indigenous communities.

### REFERENCES

- Enviroics. (2010). *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study-Main Report*. Toronto, ON: Enviroics Institute.
- Porter, L. (2010). *Unlearning the Colonial Cultures of Planning*. Burlington: Ashgate.
- Walker, R., Jojola, T., & Natcher, D. (Eds.). (2013). *Reclaiming Indigenous Planning*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researchers are grateful to the interview participants who shared their knowledge and time and acknowledge Yale Belanger, Brenda Macdougall, David Newhouse, Maeangan Linklater, and Loleen Berdahl for their contributions to the overall research program. The research was supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Insight Grant.